Limerick Chamber
Advancing business together

2027

Pre-Budget Submission: Unlocking the Mid-West's Capacity for National Competitiveness

Table of Contents

Key Recommendations

01 An Enterprise Competitiveness Package

Lower costs, better talent attraction and retention mechanisms, stronger productivity support

02 Housing, the Fastest Route to Growth

Accelerate delivery, unlock supply, density subsidies, new programme for activating permissions

03 City & Town Centre Activation

Revive urban core through renewed funding, development and security

04 Integrated Mid-West Mobility Programme

Better connections for people and businesses across the region via aviation, public transport and logistics

05 Shannon Estuary National Energy Programme

Position the Shannon Estuary as Ireland's energy and industrial hub

President's Foreword

Maria Gleeson
President, Limerick Chamber

Budget 2027 is a moment of choice. Government can either equip Ireland's regions to deliver the growth the country needs, or watch capacity sit idle while pressure mounts in places that are already full. For the Mid-West, the path forward is clear. We have the assets, the ambition and the willingness to invest. What we need now are the tools to put them to work.

I write this on behalf of businesses across the Mid-West, and the message they have shared with us is consistent. Limerick Chamber's June 2026 Business Sentiment Survey gives that message hard numbers:

- 51% of businesses faced operating cost increases of more than 10% over the past year
- 70% identify housing availability and affordability as the single greatest barrier to competitiveness
- Nearly one-third have delayed planned investment
- Yet two-thirds still intend to invest, and 40% plan to grow their workforce

Read those figures together and a clear picture emerges. This is not a region losing faith. It is a region full of confidence that keeps running into the same walls. Our members want to expand, hire and build. They are being held back not by a lack of opportunity, but by a lack of delivery.

That tension sits at the heart of this submission. The Mid-West holds many of the assets Ireland needs for its next phase of growth: an internationally connected airport, a Tier 1 port, world-class universities, the vast potential of the Shannon Estuary, and a diverse and ambitious enterprise base. These are national-scale strengths. Yet housing shortages slow recruitment, transport gaps limit mobility, and infrastructure constraints stall projects before they begin. Each delay chips away at the resilience our businesses have worked hard to build.

I want to be direct about how we frame this, because the framing matters. For too long, regional development has been treated as a question of fairness, as though the Mid-West were asking for a favour. It is not. This is a question of national economic efficiency. When growth, investment and infrastructure demand keep concentrating in the East, costs rise for everyone, housing pressure intensifies and congestion deepens. All the while, real capacity in the Mid-West remains underused. Spreading growth where the assets already exist is simply the more efficient way to run the national economy.

This is where the Government's own objectives and our region's potential meet. Ireland has set clear goals around housing, compact growth, energy security and balanced regional development. The Mid-West offers a practical place to deliver them. We are not seeking special treatment. We are seeking the tools to help the State achieve what it has already committed to.

Our submission sets out five priority interventions, each a direct response to a barrier our members have identified:

- Housing Delivery Acceleration: to unlock supply and remove the constraint holding back recruitment and growth
- Regional City Centre Revival: to activate one of our largest underused economic and residential assets
- Mid-West Connectivity & Mobility: to support compact growth and give workers and businesses the connections they need
- Shannon Estuary Green Energy & Industrial Cluster: to position the region as a leader in clean energy and industrial decarbonisation
- Regional Delivery & Infrastructure Fund: to match ambition with funding, sequencing and accountability

You will find the detail behind each of these in the pages that follow. Taken together, they form a credible, fundable plan to convert long-standing commitments into measurable results.

The opportunity here is genuinely shared. Investment that proceeds in the Mid-West eases pressure elsewhere. Jobs created here strengthen the national picture. Energy and industry developed along the Shannon Estuary advance Ireland's wider competitiveness and climate goals. When the region succeeds, the country succeeds with it.
So my ask of Government is straightforward. Use Budget 2027 as a delivery mechanism, not another statement of intent. Fund the infrastructure, provide the certainty and back the interventions that will turn potential into performance. Our businesses are ready to invest. Our institutions are ready to innovate. Our communities are ready to grow.

The Mid-West is prepared to do its part for Ireland's future. Budget 2027 is the moment to give us the means to deliver. Let us seize it together.

51%

Faced operating cost increase of more than 10%

70%

Identify housing availability as the greatest barrier

Nearly 1 in 3

Have delayed investment

2 in 3

Intend to invest in the coming 6 months

An Enterprise Competitiveness Package

Setting the Scene

Competitiveness is not only a question of tax rates or headline economic performance. For businesses across the Mid-West, it is increasingly shaped by the cumulative cost of employing people, accessing energy, investing in technology, retaining talent, complying with regulation and operating in towns and cities where local charges continue to rise.

Limerick Chamber's June 2026 Business Sentiment Survey shows the pressure clearly. Over half of responding businesses reported operating cost increases of more than 10% in the past year, while wage and payroll costs and energy costs remain among the most significant concerns for members. Nearly half of businesses have absorbed cost increases through reduced margins, and almost one third have delayed or reduced planned investment. This is not a sustainable basis for enterprise growth.

At the same time, businesses are not standing still. Two thirds of members intend to invest in their business in the coming six months, and 40% plan to grow their workforce. The appetite to expand, hire, digitise and compete remains strong, but it is being constrained by rising costs, tax barriers, labour costs and administrative complexity.

This chapter focuses on the budget measures required to reduce the cost of doing business and improve the conditions for enterprise growth. It sets out reforms to support worker retention and attraction, including changes to SARP, KEEP, income tax, retail investment rules, BIK treatment and the USC surcharge on self-employed income. It also addresses the direct cost pressures facing employers, including energy charges, payroll costs, PRSI, commercial rates and the need for a more sustainable model of local authority funding.

Government must do more to ensure tax simplification, ease of regulatory burden on businesses, and ease of application for supports to ensure continued competitiveness. For example, SMEs and Start-ups can often be deterred by the complexity, cost and administrative burden of applying for the likes of the Employment Investment Incentive Scheme (EIIS). The EIIS must be simplified removing onerous connected-party rules and revenue pre-clearance. Along with this, Government should introduce a simplified corporation tax and reporting framework for SMEs; including a short CT1 return, reducing real-time reporting obligations, and streamlined access to supports such as R&D tax credits and the EIIS.

The policy challenge is not simply to provide once-off relief. Government must create a more predictable, pro-enterprise operating environment. That means ensuring tax policy rewards work, risk and investment; that business supports are available to domestic-facing SMEs as well as exporters; that digitalisation and AI adoption are actively supported; and that decarbonisation is treated as a competitiveness issue, not only a climate obligation. Budget 2027 should therefore reduce avoidable cost pressures while reforming the systems that are making it harder for businesses to scale, invest and compete.

National Context

The actions contained in this chapter outline how regional delivery can translate to national targets. By supporting firms to invest, hire and transition, regional initiatives will feed into Ireland's White Paper on Enterprise, Digital Ireland, Climate Action Plan and broader productivity, resilience and competitiveness goals.

European Context

These actions align with EU priorities on SME competitiveness, digitalisation, clean industry, energy efficiency and decarbonisation. Measures can be advanced through available EU-compatible State Aid routes, including GBER, de minimis, the Clean Industrial Deal State Aid Framework and targeted supports that strengthen firms without creating unnecessary barriers.

Employee Costs

Special Assignee Relief Programme

We welcome the extension of SARP to 2030 brought forward in the last budget. SARP is a key tool in attracting overseas executives to Ireland. However, it could go further to bolster the skills amongst indigenous and SME companies. SARP's condition of overseas employment within the same group is not one that many Irish indigenous companies can meet. Budget 2027 should remove the requirement for prior overseas employment with the same company or group. Eligibility should instead focus on the recruitment of strategic talent into Ireland. This would allow Irish-owned businesses without overseas offices to compete on a more equal footing with multinationals and attract the senior expertise needed to grow, scale and create employment.

Key Employee Engagement Programme

KEEP remains an important tool for helping SMEs compete for and retain skilled employees. However, the practical operation of KEEP continues to limit its effectiveness. The conditions attached to the scheme can be difficult for SMEs to navigate, particularly where issues arise around filing deadlines or company valuations. Given that valuations are inherently judgement-based, and that administrative errors can occur without any tax avoidance intent, the outright denial of relief is a disproportionate consequence. This is especially problematic because the tax cost generally falls on the employee, not the company.

- A more balanced approach would be to apply a fixed penalty for administrative or compliance failures, rather than withdrawing the relief entirely. The current risk of relief being denied acts as a deterrent to SME participation and undermines the policy objective of making employee share ownership more accessible.
- In addition, the current lifetime limit on KEEP shares should be increased to better reflect the value of senior talent in scaling SMEs and to ensure the scheme is meaningful for businesses seeking to retain key employees over the long term.
- We welcome the extension of KEEP to 2028; however, KEEP should be extended out past 2030.

Retail Investors

We welcome the decrease of exit tax on life assurance policies and investment funds to 38%. However, Government must do more to encourage retail investors and a return on investment for workers. Budget 2027 should decrease exit tax to 33%, bringing it in line with capital gains tax.

Budget 2027 should also remove the deemed disposal regime for investment funds, ensuring that tax is applied when gains are realised rather than on a recurring basis while investments are still held. This would reduce complexity, improve Ireland's competitiveness, and make it easier for workers to build diversified long-term savings outside of property and pensions..

Furthermore, Limerick Chamber also supports the calls for the introduction of a Savings Investment Account (SIA), ensuring that it must be financially attractive for workers to invest by minimising the tax and regulatory burden. As part of the SIA, there should be no entry or transaction tax. Ultimately, tax incentives are required to encourage investment and make it as simple as possible to invest for retail investors.

Income Tax

Workers are increasingly squeezed by the cost of living and Ireland's tax burden, often earning too much to qualify for state support, yet too little to maintain a comfortable standard of living. Reducing their tax burden would reward productivity, improve take-home pay, and enhance Ireland's competitiveness in attracting and retaining skilled talent.

Budget 2027 must, at a minimum, bring forward indexation of tax bands to ensure that income growth is no longer eroded by fiscal drag. This should be bolstered by indexation of income tax credits.

Budget 2027 must also increase the higher rate income limit to better align with those workers earning the average wage. Workers earning the average wage or below, are brought into the upper limit too soon and thus impacts their cost of living significantly.

Gifts & Inheritance

Increasingly, our members are highlighting concern for estate planning, and planning for their children's futures. While capital acquisitions tax lifetime limit is slowly increasing it has been stagnant for the last 3 budget cycles and has yet to equalise to the pre-financial crisis limit of €542,544 with the tax rate at 22%. It should be a matter of priority of Budget 2027 that the lifetime limit begins to increase substantially to account for the increase in asset values seen over the last decade.

BIK Relief

Expand BIK relief to include workplace health and wellbeing supports. Currently, a range of employer-provided supports, including dental care, insurance, counselling, and exercise classes, fall outside the scope of BIK relief. These supports deliver a clear social benefit by improving workforce health and wellbeing, while also helping to prevent serious illness and reduce future pressures on the public healthcare system. As Ireland's population continues to grow and age, proactive investment by employers in employee health is increasingly important. Employees should not be discouraged, through tax treatment, from accessing supports that contribute to their wellbeing and long-term health.

Employer Costs

Self Employed Workers

Remove the 3% USC surcharge on self-employed income. Budget 2027 should abolish the surcharge to better recognise the risk taken by self-employed people and entrepreneurs who create jobs, generate local economic activity and contribute to Ireland's domestic enterprise base.

Research & Development Tax Credit

The RDTC has proven exceptionally effective in incentivising investment in the knowledge economy. However, we would call for iterative improvements to continue, for example increasing the first-year full payment threshold to €100,000. We also call for further enhancing the rate of the credit to 37.5%, which when coupled with a corporation tax deduction at 12.5%, would give an overall potential 50% benefit to those undertaking qualifying R&D. This would significantly increase the attractiveness of the regime and encourage both domestic and inward investment in the knowledge economy.

Energy Costs

Businesses of all sizes and sectors are becoming increasingly hampered by energy costs, this is particularly pronounced for those businesses operating in energy intensive industries.
The imperfection charge is a growing cause for concern amongst larger energy users adding significant sums to annual energy costs with imperfection charges strongly linked to natural gas prices. While we realise the investment made in recent times to strengthen the resilience of the grid infrastructure and thus address system constraints. A more immediate and interim solution is required, as outlined in the ESB paper Electricity Costs in Ireland – Drivers, Outlook and Potential Interventions.

Concerningly, as we move towards 2027, ESB highlights imperfection charges reaching almost €1 Billion euro, moving towards €1.4 billion in 2029. While this is a huge cause for concern for the nation, it is of particular concern to regional Ireland whose economy is heavily dependent on energy intensive multinational companies.

Transmission Use of System Charges, are the costs of emergency generation. In 2025, €331 million was recovered, representing nearly 27% of total transmission charges. Budget 2027 must find other alternatives to fund emergency generation, such as exchequer funding, which would have a notable positive impact on transmission charges and customer bills.

Like imperfection charges and Transmission Use of System Charges, the Public Service Obligation (PSO) is causing increasing strain on business financials. The PSO levy should be moved from electricity bills for both residential and commercial customers and should be funded by the exchequer.

Entrepreneur Capital Gains Tax (CGT)

Budget 2026's increase in the lifetime limit for Revised Entrepreneur Relief to €1.5 million was a welcome step and an acknowledgement of the important role entrepreneurs play in building Ireland's indigenous enterprise base. However, the current threshold remains too limited to meaningfully incentivise the level of risk-taking, investment and long-term commitment required to start, scale and ultimately grow a successful business.

Entrepreneurs are central to job creation, regional economic activity and the development of a stronger domestic economy. A more ambitious lifetime limit of €5 million would better reflect the value created by successful indigenous businesses and would send a clear signal that Ireland is serious about supporting enterprise, ownership and scaling ambition.

Budget 2027 should build on the progress made in Budget 2026 by further increasing the lifetime limit for Revised Entrepreneur Relief. Providing an appropriate reward for entrepreneurial risk would help encourage more individuals to start and grow businesses, retain enterprise activity in Ireland, and strengthen the domestic economy at a time when reducing over-reliance on a narrow base of multinational activity is increasingly important.

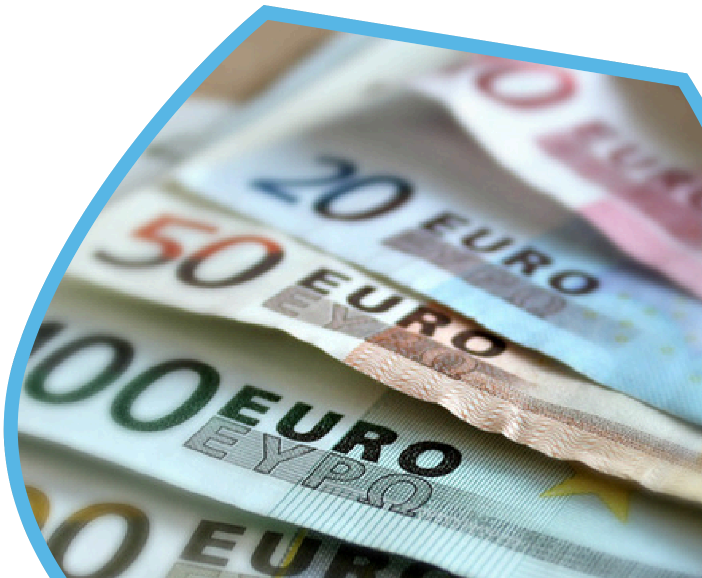
Capital Allowances Reform

Ireland's capital allowances regime plays a key role in incentivising business investment, yet it has remained largely unchanged. As part of Budget 2027, there should be accelerated capital allowances for all plant and machinery purchases, from 12.5% to 25.0% per year, against corporation tax and rental income.

Payroll Costs

Given the current cost of the business environment, Limerick Chamber asks that Budget 2027 postpones any planned increase in labour costs particularly around PRSI.

Furthermore, Budget 2027 should seek to introduce an earnings contribution cap of €75,000 for employees and for employers to introduce an earnings contribution cap of €100,000 to reduce the cost of employment.



Decarbonisation & Energy Efficiency

As energy costs continue to impact business, businesses will seek to generate more of their own renewable energy, we ask that the Accelerated Capital Allowances for energy generation equipment are extended out past 2030 and beyond.

Due to the potential deployment of solar panels and other energy generation, there are likely to be wider planning considerations for businesses and organisations involved. We ask that Budget 2027, through engagement with industry, helps to remove these potential planning barriers.

There is a huge desire amongst businesses to decarbonise quickly and at scale. However, this will require a greater incentive as part of Budget 2027. Government should introduce a standalone decarbonisation tax credit for businesses investing in emissions-reducing technologies designated as a qualified refundable tax credit, compatible with Pillar Two, distinct from the R&D tax credit. This is particularly relevant, for large and extra-large energy users. Finland has introduced a similar tax credit for the clean energy developments. The European Clean Industrial Deal allows for relaxed state aid support for investment in these industries, with Denmark recently investing over € 5 Billion in state aid via the Clean Industrial Deal. It is imperative that Ireland does not get left behind at this critical juncture in both climate transition and indeed ensuring economic resilience.

NTF Contribution

Budget 2027 should introduce a clear “use it or lose it” mechanism for the National Training Fund by setting a firm upper limit on the fund’s accumulated surplus over a multi-year period. Once that threshold is reached, the training levy should be automatically paused on a temporary basis.

Such a cap would ensure that, where the State is unable to deploy the available resources effectively and a surplus over an agreed ceiling is built up the money is returned to employers allowing them to invest directly in workforce development and other initiatives.

There is a strict need to monitor and analyse the outcomes of exchequer spending in workforce development, to ensure efficacy. Given that almost one third of our members outline that greater support is required for training and upskilling – there may be a mismatch between industry desire and what is being provided across the various strands of training and upskilling. There needs to be a central role for efficiency to ensure that expenditure is leading to actual workforce development.

Small Benefit Exemption

In an effort to continually reward staff the small benefit exemption should be increased to €2,000 as part of Budget 2027. Furthermore, the real time reporting requirements for the scheme should be reviewed providing a more fluid and less rigid period for reporting from businesses e.g. reporting once or twice a year rather than on the provision of each benefit, thereby reducing the disproportionate administrative burden on businesses.

Employer Accommodation Incentive

While employers are reluctant to enter into the property market on behalf of their employees, there have been some instances of it being a requirement in order to attract key staff. Budget 2027 should implement an incentive whereby rental income from employer-owned housing is at 12.5% corporation tax rather than 25%, with Benefit in Kind relief for employees earning under €50,000.

Enterprise Supports

Support for Domestic Growth

Some business supports can focus on domestic trade, however, this does not go far enough to encourage resilience building in expanding SMEs to trade at the national level rather than local or regional. As highlighted in our 2026 Pre-budget submission, the state must diversify its tax revenues by growing indigenous SMEs.
Too often as part of business support administered through Enterprise Ireland and the Local Enterprise Office priority is given to those in the manufacturing or international traded sectors. This can be prohibitive to many other SMEs willing to grow domestically but not internationally and the criteria must be widened.

Furthermore, business size eligibility is often seen as prohibitive with some supports outlining a maximum of 10 employees but can be increased further on a case-by-case basis, this is overly restrictive and may turn off larger SMEs applying.

Many of our members wish to grow sales in Ireland (43% of businesses) and the likes of the Market Explorer grant could have a huge impact with this cohort, however, it is limited to those that seek to internationalise.

Many of our businesses cite wage and payroll costs as a growing concern (59%), the likes of the GradStart programme, again, could have a huge positive impact but again is limited to businesses in manufacturing and international traded services. If it was opened to more domestically focused businesses, it would help these businesses to grow. Similarly, green and lean for business and the energy efficiency grant have a criterion of a maximum of 50 employees. In an environment where 52% of businesses (second highest) cite energy costs as a concern, expanding Green for Business will be a boost to organisations with more than 50 staff.

Commercial Rates

Commercial rates are becoming an increasingly large issue for businesses. As Local Authorities budgets tighten and the cost of doing business increases, Local Authorities are increasingly looking for rate increases to bolster gaps in their budgets. This is unacceptable and businesses must not become funders of last resort for Local Authorities. Budget 2027 should commence a review of how local government is funded, with the objective of creating a more sustainable and balanced revenue model for local authorities.

Local authorities need sufficient resources to invest in towns, cities, public realm, services, regeneration and economic development. However, their revenue-raising options remain narrow, relying heavily on local property tax, development contributions and commercial rates. This creates pressure to repeatedly increase charges on businesses, particularly where local service and infrastructure needs are growing.

Businesses have an important role in supporting local areas, but they cannot be expected to absorb continuous increases in local taxation at a time when many are already facing rising labour, energy, insurance, compliance and operating costs. Over-reliance on commercial rates risks weakening competitiveness, discouraging investment and placing additional pressure on the very businesses that sustain town and city centres.

A more resilient local funding model is required. Budget 2027 should begin the process of identifying alternative and complementary funding sources for local authorities, reducing dependence on rate increases while ensuring councils have the resources needed to invest in attractive, safe and economically vibrant places.

AI & Digital Support

Budget 2027 should provide stronger support for businesses seeking to digitalise, adopt AI and improve cyber resilience. Our June 2026 survey shows clear demand:

- 93% of surveyed companies have adopted AI or automation to some degree.
- Digital transformation is a top-four priority for both SMEs and large businesses in the Mid-West.
- Data protection and GDPR are the second-highest general regulatory burden for businesses.
- SMEs and large businesses say support for digitalisation and AI adoption would help them manage costs.

We ask that Budget 2027 introduces:

- A tiered AI training grant, based on business size, to support staff training and wider AI skills adoption.
- An expanded Grow Digital Voucher to cover AI, digital technologies, compliance and cybersecurity, ensuring Irish firms are not left behind in AI adoption.
- Increased funding for the National Cyber Security Centre to expand the Cyber Security Grant and support more businesses.
- Broader eligibility for the Cyber Review Grant, including companies that are not Enterprise Ireland clients.
- Targeted e-commerce support for bricks-and-mortar businesses to improve their digital presence and show real-time in-store inventory online. This would help local businesses grow both online and in-store trade.

Housing, the Fastest Route to Growth

Setting the Scene

Delivery is now the central test of Government ability. Ireland has no shortage of strategies, targets or plans, but businesses and workers in the Mid-West continue to experience the real-world consequences of delayed infrastructure, constrained housing supply, slow utility connections, underused brownfield land and city-centre vacancy. The result is a region with strong ambition but too many barriers to growth and not enough central Government support.

The business case for delivery is clear. In Limerick Chamber's June 2026 Business Sentiment Survey, housing supply and affordability was identified as the single greatest drag on Mid-West competitiveness, cited by 70% of businesses. When workers cannot find suitable and affordable homes, employers struggle to recruit, retain and expand and wage pressures experienced by employers increase.

This chapter focuses on the practical infrastructure and housing measures needed to unlock development. It addresses water and wastewater capacity, grid and utility connections, planning activation, apartment viability, Croí Cónaithe, strategic landbanking, modern methods of construction and the need to bring existing permissions to commencement. Without enough homes in the right locations, businesses cannot attract or retain staff, compact growth cannot be achieved, and regional cities cannot realise their potential.

Delivery also means reviving the city centre. A competitive region needs a functioning urban core that can attract residents, workers, visitors and investment. Limerick City Centre must be supported as the commercial, residential, cultural and civic heart of the Mid-West. That requires a whole-of-city approach covering Living Cities Initiative reform, public realm, safety, dereliction, brownfield activation, over-the-shop living, night-time and day-time economy supports, and a dedicated City Centre Revival Fund.

The policy response must move beyond isolated schemes and towards integrated delivery: funding, planning, tax incentives, enforcement, safety and activation working together to turn plans into visible progress. Budget 2027 must therefore focus not only on announcing measures, but on ensuring that housing, infrastructure and regeneration supports can be delivered in regional cities such as Limerick.

There are wider policy considerations that must be tackled as part of Budget 2027 and subsequent housing plans. There must be equalisation between social and affordable homes, too often targets are weighted heavily in favour of social homes, meaning less affordable stock available for working cohorts. This leads to an increase in state activity in the private market, with either local authorities or AHBs buying homes from private developers and ultimately competing with and reducing available homes for owner occupiers.

National Context

Local action on serviced land, water and wastewater, grid capacity, planning resources, brownfield activation, apartment viability and city-centre regeneration can directly support national housing, compact growth and regional-balance targets. Better regional delivery will help advance the National Planning Framework, Project Ireland 2040, NDP, RSES and Limerick-Shannon MASP.

European Context

These actions align with EU priorities on affordable housing, sustainable land use, urban regeneration, climate resilience and compact development. Delivery can be supported through EU-compatible State Aid routes, including de minimis, GBER, local infrastructure, energy-efficiency and urban-renewal schemes, where supports are transparent, proportionate and linked to public policy objectives.

Enabling Infrastructure

Rebate Scheme

Reinstate the Uisce Éireann connection rebate for SME builders. Budget 2027 should introduce a targeted, time-limited rebate to offset water connection costs for smaller developers, particularly in county towns and rural areas. This would improve project viability, unlock additional housing supply and support balanced regional development.

Water Treatment

We welcome the decision by Government to implement new regulations through the Developer-Led Wastewater Initiative. This is a most welcome change and will allow developers to work with Uisce Éireann to build water treatment infrastructure to unlock residential development. Having asked for such a scheme (with financial support) in our Pre-budget submission in 2026 we welcome its introduction, however, changes need to be made to ensure its success. It is imperative that not only is there a deduction on levies to offset the cost of building the treatment infrastructure to the developer, but it is also critical that Irish Water take over the running and management of the treatment infrastructure once built.

Grid and Water Connections

The speed at which developments are connected to water and energy is cause for concern by developers and builders in the region. Budget 2027 must ensure that, along with boosting capacity, that investment is deployed to ensure that connections are speedily deployed where capacity exists.

Development Levy Rebate

Budget 2027 should reintroduce the development levy rebate with a strict date for completion. While the previous development levy rebate increased “paper commencements” and the increase in these commencements did not have a commensurate

increase in completions, there are schemes that went ahead and were started and completed (or are well underway to being completed) that otherwise would not have gone ahead.

Housing Additionality

Rent a Room Relief

Rent a Room Relief has remained stagnant for almost a decade. As part of Budget 2027, Government must incentivise participation and the release of rooms to the market, by increasing relief to €16,000 per year.

Activating Permissions

Limerick's Local Development Plan Variation highlighted that of the 8,738 homes with planning permission in Limerick just 36% of homes were commenced, meaning 64% of homes with planning permission (5,610 homes have not commenced). There is huge potential upside for delivery for Government if activation measures are deployed to bring these permissions to use – many of which are led by SME builders.

Budget 2027 must deploy funding to activate these permissions, ensuring that they must have been idle for a certain number of years, or are facing significant financial constraints, in order to reduce dead weight. The first iteration of Project Tosaigh by the LDA was successful in this regard and focused on smaller builders and developers. Budget 2027 must bring forward, and resource a scheme, through forward funding, whereby tranches of homes stuck in the system under the ownership of SME builders are activated and moved to commencement stage. Furthermore, if Local Authorities are engaging in dialogue to activate these permissions, then Budget 2027 must support the activities of the local authority.

Modern Methods of Construction (MMC)

Limerick Chamber has long been a supporter of MMC, seeing it as a piece of the solution when it comes to the housing crisis. Furthermore, we support the Government's ambition to see 25% of new public homes delivered using MMC. The unique selling point of MMC, and modular homes, is the time saved in the delivery of the homes versus a traditional build. There is huge potential to establish a dedicated MMC innovation and testing factory in the region, close to the port, rail and road links. As part of Budget 2027 Government should support the establishment of such a factory by allowing a 100% upfront capital allowance for modular construction equipment.

Strategic Land Banking

Limerick Chamber welcomes the expansion of funding available under the Land Acquisition Fund. While the Land Acquisition Fund has supported land acquisition by local authorities, there remains limited public visibility on where the fund has been used, the number of homes enabled by county, and the expected delivery timelines for acquired sites. Budget 2027 should require the Department of Housing and the Housing Agency to publish quarterly data on Land Acquisition Fund approvals, completed acquisitions, local authority area, site capacity, intended tenure mix and expected housing delivery timelines. This would improve accountability, ensure the expanded fund supports balanced regional delivery and ensure that Local Authorities are being innovative when it comes to playing a proactive role in solving the housing crisis.

Planner to Application Ratio

Budget 2027 must ensure that Local Authorities are adequately equipped to make speedy decisions regarding planning applications. Government should agree to an adequate application / housing to planner ratio and ensure Local Authorities meet this requirement providing funding where required to backfill roles. This should be similar to a pupil / teacher ratio.

Density Supports

The limited level of apartment delivery in Limerick and comparable regional cities highlights the need for a more realistic approach to national density supports.

While compact growth remains an important policy objective, one which Limerick Chamber fully supports, density standards must be capable of supporting viable development in different market conditions. A model designed around the economics of larger urban centres (Dublin) does not always translate effectively to smaller cities (Limerick), where sales values, construction costs and financing conditions can make apartment schemes difficult to deliver.

In many cases, the only purchasers capable of making higher-density schemes viable are State bodies or Approved Housing Bodies.

Budget 2027 must regionalise policy and funding in order to make apartment viability work in Limerick and other regional cities.

We ask that Budget 2027:
1) Expands Croí Cónaithe
2) Reduces VAT & Stamp Duty
3) Increases subvention available through the Affordable Housing Fund

Croí Cónaithe

When announced, Croí Cónaithe cities had the stated ambition of delivering 5,000 apartments. As per 2025, contracts had been signed to deliver just over 1,000 apartments through the scheme. The regions can play a larger role in helping the Government achieve their 5,000 target, but this can only happen if development economics and viability stacks up. As part of Budget 2027 Government should bring forward an Enhanced Croí Cónaithe Cities whereby the viability gap support is larger to account for lower sales values and incomes in regional cities such as Limerick. Without such an enhancement owner occupiers and workers will be increasingly locked out of apartment developments.

VAT & Stamp Duty

To achieve Government's compact growth targets, greater emphasis must be placed on delivering apartments in regional locations, such as Limerick, that are targeted towards workers. Time restricted reduced VAT and Stamp Duty Reliefs, along with Help-to-Buy and an Enhanced Croí Cónaithe Cities will encourage more owner occupiers into apartment buildings. To help regional development of apartments VAT on apartment construction should be decreased to 5% and a full stamp duty refund, limited to a 7-year window.

Affordable Housing Fund

The Affordable Housing Fund should be expanded to ensure delivery of apartments to owner occupiers. The current subvention cap of €100,000 is not large enough to ensure apartments are developed for sale in regional cities like Limerick. Budget 2027 should expand the Affordable Housing Fund to a significant enough quantum in the regions whereby affordable apartments can be targeted towards working cohorts. The expanded level of subvention should be in the region of €150,000 to €200,000. There are varying levels of support required on a site by site basis, if the land is owned by a local authority, for example, a subvention on the lower end of the scale will work, however, if the land needs to be purchased then a subvention towards the larger end of the scale will be required. Budget 2027 should introduce an enhanced flexible Affordable Housing Fund that can be deployed in the regions on a site-by-site basis.

City & Town Centre Activation

Setting the Scene

City and town centres are economic infrastructure. They are where people live, work, trade, socialise, access services and form their first impression of a place. Yet too many urban centres are being held back by vacancy, dereliction, weak footfall, poor public realm, safety concerns, viability gaps, fragmented ownership and limited residential activity. For Limerick and other regional centres, revitalisation cannot be achieved through isolated schemes or short-term grants. It requires a coordinated approach that combines housing activation, commercial vacancy reduction, safety, public realm, heritage reuse, mobility, cultural activity and business supports. Budget 2027 must therefore move beyond regeneration announcements and fund visible, measurable delivery that brings people, enterprise and confidence back into the urban core.

Many Chamber members are united under the need to revitalise the city centre. Regardless of where the member's businesses are located, how many employees they have or what sector they operate in, they understand the economic impact of a strong and healthy city centre. Half of members surveyed see Budget 2027 bringing forward tax incentives for city centre regeneration as critical - the top choice for tax measures along with income and marginal tax changes.

There is a desire amongst businesses and private operators to do more for, and in, city centres. However, there must be a valid support and incentive policy. To date, much of the funding has been directed towards local authorities on a matched funding basis, meaning local authorities lack the resources to carry out projects, this must be changed. But there also needs to be greater collaboration between private and public organisations in order to propel city centres forward.

Part of this chapter makes the case that if appropriately incentivised through various funds and tax schemes, the private sector can become part of a larger delivery mechanism for city and town centres.

National Context

The recommendations in this chapter will help to enable action on town-centre renewal, housing delivery, vacancy, dereliction, safety and sustainable mobility - turning national policy into delivery. Multi-annual funding, stronger enforcement, tax reform and local capacity will help meet compact-growth, housing, balanced regional-growth and reduced car-dependency targets across NPF, Project Ireland 2040, NDP and Climate Action Plan.

European Context

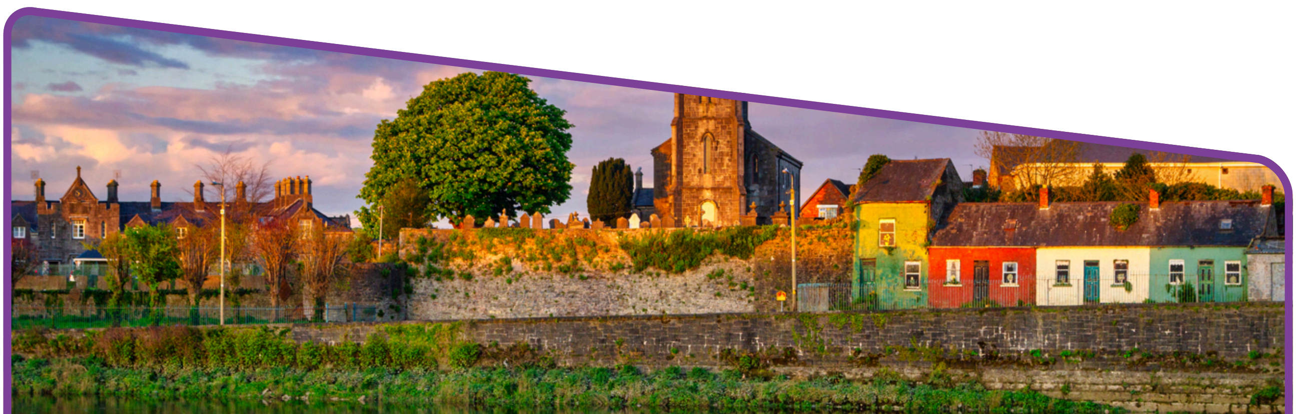
Proposed actions fit EU urban, climate and competitiveness policy and can use State Aid routes such as GBER, de minimis and transparent regeneration and heritage schemes. They reflect proven models including Action Cœur de Ville, HafenCity Hamburg, Dutch Business Investment Zones, Ljubljana public realm, Ghent circulation planning and France's Malraux regime.

City Centre Safety

Limerick Chamber welcomes the huge positive impact high visibility policing has made to Limerick City Centre over the last number of months. Investment in these essential services has resulted in a significant positive uplift for residents and businesses in the city. However, such a positive result must not mean complacency sets in.

With regards to safety, Budget 2027 must:

- Fund a community engagement van for Limerick. Currently the community engagement van is shared between several divisions. When used in Limerick city centre, it has made a significant positive impact.
- Resource the courts systems adequately so private security can be deployed in place of Gardaí working in the courts, so that they can be reallocated to front line policing.
- Fund the CCTV centre in Limerick, deploying multi-annual funding to ensure it continues operations.
- Limerick Chamber commends work to date on the National Retail Crime Strategy; Budget 2027 must ensure that adequate resources are deployed to support the strategy in its implementation and protect retail workers and businesses.
- Budget 2027 must ensure that wider wraparound supports are available into the evening and night time for those at risk, what can regularly happen is Gardaí are the only on-call service to engage with at-risk individuals when another service or agency would be more appropriate. This results in less time for crime prevention duties.



Living Cities Initiative

Limerick Chamber sees the LCI as a critical instrument in city centre regeneration. We welcome Government changes to extend the qualifying period to 2030, to broaden the eligibility to homes built before 1975 and the expansion of the programme to large towns. We also welcome the relief limit increase to €300,000. The inclusion of €300,000 per 3-year qualifying period is most welcome and should allow owners to carry out increased levels of works in stages.

Limerick City Centre, as part of Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) 1 South City Centre and Newtown Perry, is home to a significant number of buildings recognised by the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage as being significant in a regional context. Many of these buildings are also protected structures.

Under European Commission Regulation No 651/2014, the Government could expand funding for the living cities initiative beyond De Minimis Limits to aid that falls within the General Block Exemption Rule (GBER). Articles 38, 53 and 56 of the regulation focus on aid for energy efficiency, aid for culture and heritage conservation, and aid for local infrastructures to foster economic development. Utilising GBER, rather than De Minimis, would allow state support for regeneration of buildings within ACA to increase drastically, furthermore it would allow for 100% recoupment of eligible costs.

Budget 2027 should advance the following with respect to LCI:

- Investigate expanding state aid to utilise GBER versus De Minimis with the view to deploying greater aid to buildings of historical significance.
- Extend relief out past 2030.
- Increase relief to 20 % of qualifying costs per annum, allowing claiming of qualified expenditure over a five-year period, rather than seven in the case of residential and commercial relief, and ten years in the case of owner-occupier relief. This will ensure quicker return on investment for persons carrying out the works.
- Allow tax relief to be claimed from the year renovation starts by allowing for the throwback of 20% of qualifying expenditure to the prior tax year to trigger a refund. This would essentially be a retrospective mechanism akin to Help-to-Buy, easing upfront costs.
- Introduce a provision whereby any unused relief transfers to a new owner once the first owner-occupier has met a minimum residency period.
- Prices of older housing stock are increasing in line with second hand homes, Budget 2027 should expand the First Home Shared Equity scheme to allow for the purchase of homes in special regeneration areas.
- Recognise the LCI and built heritage as more than solely a residential opportunity by recognising the part it has to play in the economic development and vibrancy of city centres, but also the tourism potential by making areas more attractive.

Animation

Night and Day-Time Economy

The Night-Time Economy (NTE) initiative has been successful in Limerick, and we commend Government support for the programme. Budget 2027 must aim to increase funding for the NTE but also expand the initiative to Daytime Economy (DTE) activities.

Outdoor Dining Waiver

We welcome Government's decision to waive the outdoor dining fee until September 2026. Budget 2027 is an appropriate time to extend the waiver on a more long-term basis, and we ask that the waiver be extended to 2030, to begin moving away from yearly extensions of the waiver and give business more confidence in the long-term nature of outdoor dining.

Twin Cities Status

Limerick is one of 24 selected European cities to be given "Twin City" status with the project intended to support cities across Europe to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and achieve a climate neutral status. Limerick, twinned with Tampere in Finland, will complete an 18-month programme under the remit of "Mobility Mindshift – Co-designing a Mindshift for Sustainable Mobility". Nationally, such a programme will help Ireland move closer to net zero but also disseminate learnings from other cities. Government should use this tool to ringfence funding for the implementation of findings from the research of the Twin Cities.

Derelict Property Development

Derelict property development, along with the development of derelict sites, can play a key role in boosting housing supply and rejuvenating city centres. Budget 2027 should implement a derelict property regeneration relief that removes the 33% CGT which can make speculative renovation unviable. This can be implemented similar to France's Malraux regime that allows for 30% income tax deduction for renovation in protected zones.

Development

Brownfield & Derelict Site Development

Budget 2027 should introduce targeted, time-limited tax measures to unlock brownfield and underutilised sites within designated city-centre areas. These measures should be designed to improve the viability of high-density residential and mixed-use development where delivery is currently constrained by abnormal costs, fragmented ownership, infrastructure deficits or weak market returns.

Targeted reductions in construction levies, development-related charges and relevant duties should be made available for qualifying projects that deliver additional housing, activate vacant land or bring strategically located sites back into productive use. Unlocking city-centre brownfield land is essential not only to increasing housing supply, but also to restoring vibrancy, footfall and economic activity in regional urban cores.

A more flexible tax framework is also required to support the relocation of existing businesses from strategically important city-centre sites where those lands could be better used for residential or mixed-use development. Capital Gains Tax rollover relief should be made available where a business disposes of property within a designated regeneration area and reinvests in suitable replacement commercial premises. This would help free up land for housing while ensuring that viable businesses are not penalised for relocating to more appropriate locations.

Budget 2027 should also strengthen the operation of the Derelict Sites Act 1990. This should include more robust enforcement powers, greater transparency in Derelict Sites Registers, clearer reporting on local authority action, and a balanced system of incentives and penalties to encourage owners to repurpose vacant, derelict or underutilised land. A more active approach to brownfield regeneration is essential if city centres are to become places where more people can live, work, visit and invest.

As per the most recent available data, Limerick had the greatest number of derelict sites in the country at 427, with Mayo coming second at 284. The number of derelict sites on the most recent register outlined that Limerick accounted for 22% of the country's total. For 63% of these sites in Limerick a notice / demand under the act had been issued. The data further outlines that Limerick had €2 million in cumulative levies outstanding – the fourth highest in the country.

The Derelict Sites Act can play a key role in activating these brownfield and derelict sites when administered correctly.

City Centre Revival Fund

Budget 2027 should establish a City Centre Revival Fund (CCRF) to support multi-annual regeneration programmes in Ireland's regional cities. The fund should combine current and capital spend via worker housing activation, commercial vacancy reduction, public realm, safety, mobility, heritage reuse and local enterprise supports into one delivery framework, with clear annual targets and published progress data specifically targeted for the city centre of Ireland's five cities.

There would be a distinct difference between the CCRF and the Urban Regeneration Fund:

- The CCRF would be targeted to the five cities only.
- The CCRF would focus on current spending as well as capital spending i.e. funding for the continual operation of safety via lighting as well as the funding to put the lighting in.
- The URDF operated under a matched funding model. With Limerick, this has led to significantly stalled projects. The CCRF should fully fund public projects.
- Recipients of the CCRF would not only be public entities with the programme providing grants for shopfronts, meanwhile use, events, lighting, painting and physical activation.
- Outcomes and milestones updated and published on a quarterly basis.
- The CCRF would operate on a more semi-permanent timeline of five years, with multi-annual funding available for longer term projects.
- The CCRF could provide private organisations with grants to set up certain businesses / undertake certain capital works in city centres, that otherwise would not happen.

The outcomes of the CCRF should be:

- Improving city centre vitality through decreased vacancy, increased footfall and promoting diversity of business.
- Improve public realm and city greening through the funding of projects aimed at raising the aesthetics of the city centre.
- Allow for public and private organisations to begin the process of removing cross street and public facing electrical wires on buildings.
- Improve liveability in city centres by focusing on the provision of worker housing.
- Improve the aesthetics of existing buildings through shop front improvement schemes and painting grants.
- Share the implementation responsibility of projects between the public and private sector.

The CCRF is similar to the French Action Cœur de Ville (ACV) which was launched in 2018 and is managed by the National Agency for Territorial Cohesion (ANCT). At its launch, the French Government allocated €5 billion to fund projects from 2018 to 2022. The ACV focuses on five areas to guide actions:

- From rehabilitation to restructuring, towards an attractive housing offer.
- To promote balanced economic and commercial development.
- Develop accessibility and low-carbon mobility.
- To sustainably develop urban space and enhance architectural and landscape heritage.
- Establish a foundation of services in each city.

Integrated Mid-West Mobility Programme

Setting the Scene

Connectivity is a growth and competitiveness enabler. As part of our most recent survey, traffic congestion, transport and mobility were cited by a third of members as hampering the region's competitiveness. For the Mid-West, better connections mean more than shorter journey times; they determine whether workers can access jobs, students can access education, businesses can access markets, tourists can access the region, freight can move efficiently, and sustainably, through national and international gateways. Limerick's future competitiveness depends on a transport and aviation system that matches the scale of its economic ambition.

Transport congestion, planning delays and inadequate infrastructure directly impact staff satisfaction, commuting patterns, productivity, investment decisions and the ability of firms to expand across the region. Ultimately this leads to an impact on retention and attraction.
This chapter sets out the need for a connected, multi-modal Limerick-Shannon region. It covers Shannon Airport, regional route development, a renewed National Aviation Policy, metropolitan rail, BusConnects, intercity coach services, sustainable logistics, rail freight, strategic roads, park-and-ride facilities and key access upgrades such as the Mackey / Newport Roundabout and the N21 / N69 Limerick to Foynes Road Scheme. These projects are not standalone asks; together they form the infrastructure required to support compact growth, enterprise development, regional tourism, port and airport access and labour mobility.

LSMATS, national aviation policy, rail investment, bus reform, active travel, park-and-ride and strategic road delivery must be sequenced together, not advanced in isolation. But ultimately, they need to move from the shelf to tangible delivery. Budget 2027 should provide the capital funding, operational supports and delivery timelines needed to build an integrated transport network for the region.

This must include stronger links between housing, employment locations, education campuses, Shannon Airport, Shannon Foynes Port and Limerick City Centre. A growing region cannot be supported by disconnected transport systems, and a region expected to deliver national growth must be given the infrastructure to move people, goods and investment efficiently.

National Context

This chapter's measures on Shannon Airport, metropolitan rail, BusConnects, park-and-ride, intercity bus, rail freight, strategic roads and port access can turn national transport and climate policy into delivery. Local investment will support NPF, Project Ireland 2040, NTA policy and CAP targets for decarbonisation, compact growth and regional balance.

European Context

These actions fit EU TEN-T, sustainable mobility, modal shift, rail-freight, accessibility and decarbonisation priorities. Projects such as park-and-ride, rail mobility hubs, bus priority, airport connectivity, port access and city-centre mobility reforms can use State Aid routes including open infrastructure, PSO / open calls, de minimis, GBER or notified aid.

Aviation

Regional Airports Programme

Limerick Chamber welcomes the Government's inclusion of Shannon Airport in the Regional Airports Programme (RAP) - this inclusion allows Shannon to receive operational and capital funding for safety and security related projects and activities, and support sustainability initiatives. This will have a large positive impact on the airport. However, we ask as part of Budget 2027 that the RAP's overall budget allocation is increased to ensure funding is deployed at a sufficient scale to deliver tangible, high-impact outcomes aligned with national policy objectives.

Route Development Fund

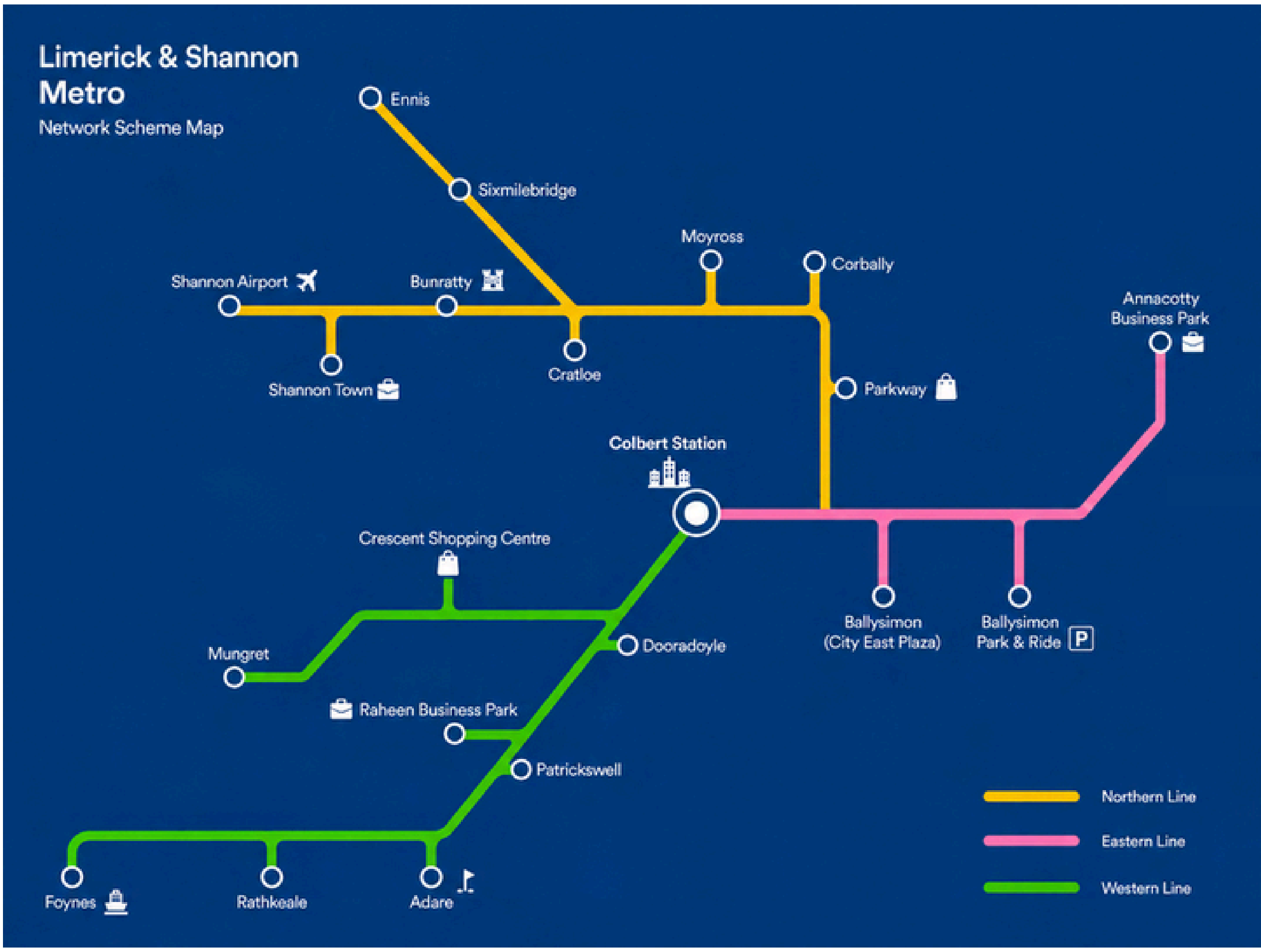
Establish a dedicated, well-resourced Regional Airport Route Development Fund, ring-fenced for regional air access and focused on strategic business and tourism routes. For the Mid-West of Ireland, enhanced route connectivity is a critical economic development enabler, supporting investment, exports, tourism, and access to global markets. Priority should be given to routes with codeshare agreements and strong onward connectivity through key international hubs, ensuring regional businesses can connect efficiently with customers, suppliers, investors, and overseas partners while strengthening the region's competitiveness and alignment with national policy objectives.

National Aviation Policy

Ireland's last National Aviation Policy was launched in 2015. Budget 2027 must ensure that the Department is adequately resourced to advance the new National Aviation Plan. The plan, and implementation of its goals, must be backed by adequate funding and a clear multi-annual framework for capital, operational and marketing support. It should prioritise regional connectivity, supporting airports such as Shannon in line with Project Ireland 2040, and ensuring the airports are seen as a key driver in attaining the goals of the National Planning Framework.

Public Transport

Metropolitan Rail



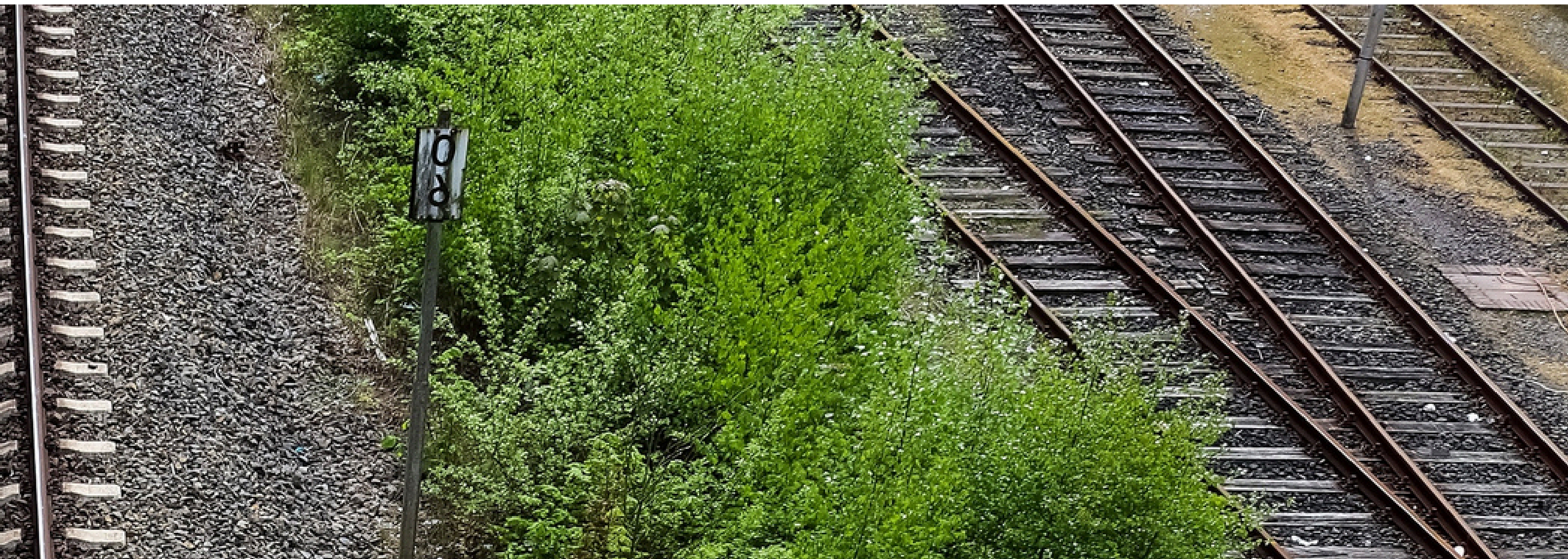
Budget 2027 must allocate a dedicated multiyear capital envelope to begin developing a metropolitan rail network for the Limerick-Shannon area.

The development of such a network supports:

- National Connectivity: Dual-tracking Colbert– Limerick Junction fulfils LSMATS and NTA commitments and removes a critical single-line bottleneck on the Dublin–Cork– Limerick spine
- Balanced Growth: A commuter network underpins compact housing delivery, labour mobility and Project Ireland 2040's Mid-West population targets
- Climate & Competitiveness: An airport rail link cuts carbon-intensive car trips for commuters, supports enterprise and tourism, supports Transport Oriented Development and enhances FDI appeal.

Overall, the development of the network should:

- Fund the delivery of the 'spur' leading from the Foynes line to Colbert Station
- Dual-track Limerick Colbert to Limerick Junction; design, construction and signalling.
- Deliver a Limerick-Shannon commuter rail network with new stations at Moyross, Ballysimon and Raheen with the view to expand further and deliver ongoing stops along Northern, Eastern and Western lines.
- See the conversion of the Foynes freight line to mixed passenger– freight use
- Advance the Shannon Airport Rail Link to shovel-ready stage, in line with the All-Island Strategic Rail Review target year 2030.



BusConnects

The continued delay of funding the rollout of BusConnects Limerick is incredibly disappointing and has serious spatial planning and economic development ramifications. Modal shift is a cornerstone of the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (LSMATS), without a timely delivery this modal shift is delayed. Compact and transport-oriented developments are foundations of the National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), and without an adequately resourced bus network, it is difficult to plan for future growth. Budget 2027 must fund the rollout of BusConnects prior to 2028. Without funding BusConnects, staff who rely on a functional network will continually be disadvantaged.

Intercity Bus Services

Budget 2027 must ensure targeted investment in intercity coach infrastructure that will enable operators to provide faster and more frequent journey times between Shannon Airport, Limerick and Cork, Galway, Dublin and Dublin Airport.

Annacotty Business Park

We welcome the decision to implement a trial bus route to Annacotty Business Park, a significant employment node in Limerick. Private-led work has been completed at the park to ensure adequate facilities are in place for the bus route. Budget 2027 needs to allocate funding to bring the route forward and ensure public investment matches private investment.

Park & Rides

Budget 2027 should provide ring-fenced capital funding to progress the four park-and-ride sites identified for Limerick: Ennis Road, M20 Raheen, N24 Ballysimon and M7 Mackey.

These facilities are outlined under LSMATS and are needed to support a growing commuter population, reduce congestion on key city approaches and provide workers, students and visitors with a reliable alternative to car-based travel into Limerick.

Park-and-ride facilities must be developed as integrated mobility hubs, located close to existing or planned bus and rail nodes and supported by frequent onward services to the city centre, higher education institutions, schools, hospitals and major employment locations. The Ballysimon site should be progressed as a rail-based park-and-ride facility, while the bus-based sites should be linked to high-frequency shuttle and orbital services.

Budget 2027 should fund design, planning, land activation, enabling works and phased delivery of these sites to ensure LSMATS moves from strategy to implementation.

Logistics

Shannon Estuary Sustainable Multimodal Logistics Hub

The Shannon Estuary Economic Taskforce (SEETF) report recommends the introduction of a national logistics hub that connects the region to the rest of Ireland and beyond. Limerick Chamber supports this recommendation and asks that funding be included in Budget 2027. The introduction of a sustainable logistics hub will allow the region to build upon a bedrock for sustainable economic development. We know there is demand for such a service, connected to the port, that will allow businesses more logistical opportunities in the west of Ireland, freeing up congestion in Dublin. The funding allocated as part of Budget 2027 must move the project from feasibility stage to planning stage.

Sustainable Rail Freight

The track access charge for rail freight discourages its use and contributes to increased HGV traffic on our roads. In line with the findings of the All-Island Strategic Rail Review, this charge should be reduced as part of Budget 2027.

Road Network

N21 / N69 Foynes to Limerick Road Scheme

Limerick Chamber welcomes funds deployed to date to begin construction of the Adare Bypass, however, the overall pace of delivery for the Limerick to Foynes Road needs to be increased and Budget 2027 must allocate funding for the next stage of development and approve gate two funding for the project. The development of the Foynes to Limerick road by 2030 is critical to logistical development of the region and also to Shannon Foynes Port's designation as a TEN-T port.

N / M20 Limerick to Cork Road

The continued absence of a high-quality Cork–Limerick connection is not just an infrastructure gap; it is a barrier to regional ambition. First discussed in 1998, the N / M20 remains undelivered despite its importance in linking Ireland's second and third largest cities.
This project is essential to improving safety, reducing journey times, supporting enterprise, and strengthening the Atlantic Economic Corridor.
Budget 2027 must give the N / M20 the priority and funding certainty it requires, recognising it as a nationally significant investment that will unlock growth across the Southern Region.

Mackey Roundabout & LNDR Phase 1

Budget 2027 should fund immediate safety and connectivity improvements at the Mackey / Newport Roundabout, including a dedicated slip road to the National Technology Park and wider junction upgrades.

This junction is a critical access point between the M7, Limerick city east, the University of Limerick and the National Technology Park. Congestion regularly backs up onto the motorway at the Dublin Road exit, creating safety risks and undermining reliable access to one of the Mid-West's most important employment and innovation locations.
In parallel, Government should protect the long-term requirement for the Limerick Northern Distributor Road as Limerick's population, universities and enterprise base continue to grow.

Going forward, Phase 1 of the LNDR will likely see connections with the Mackey / Newport Roundabout but safety upgrades must proceed regardless to mitigate the current challenges seen at the roundabout.

Shannon Estuary National Energy Programme

Setting the Scene

Building the future requires a shift from short-term budget measures to long-term national resilience and an acknowledgement that the regions can deliver on national priorities. The Mid-West has the assets to make a major contribution to Ireland's next phase of growth: a strong enterprise base, higher education institutions, Shannon Airport, Shannon Foynes Port, the Shannon Estuary, strategic industrial land, renewable energy potential and a growing metropolitan area. However, these assets will only deliver national value if policy, planning and investment are aligned.

The June 2026 Business Sentiment Survey shows that businesses in the region are ready to adapt. Digital transformation is a top priority for both SMEs and larger firms, and 93% of surveyed companies have already implemented AI or automation to varying degrees. Businesses also identified support for digitalisation and AI adoption as a practical way to help manage costs. This points to a clear opportunity: the Mid-West can be a region of innovation and transition, but only if policy supports firms to invest in skills, technology and productivity.

This chapter focuses on the structural reforms and strategic investments needed to position the region for long-term growth. It calls for Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies to become funded delivery mechanisms rather than aspirational planning documents. It also advances the case for SERAI and the designation of the Shannon Estuary as Ireland's first Green Energy Park of scale, using LEAP and RED III as policy levers to support renewable energy acceleration, large energy-user co-location, port-led development, biomethane, offshore wind, industrial decarbonisation and energy security.

The future economy also depends on social and institutional infrastructure. Higher education, skills, childcare, healthcare and justice are not secondary issues; they are core requirements for regional competitiveness and quality of life. Almost one third of surveyed members identified the need for greater support for training and upskilling, highlighting the importance of aligning education, enterprise and workforce development.

Budget 2027 should therefore fund the systems that enable people and businesses to thrive: universities and technological universities, research and innovation capacity, hospital delivery, childcare supports, prison capacity and community safety. The policy task is to connect these investments into a coherent regional growth model, ensuring the Mid-West is not only resilient to future shocks, but positioned to lead in clean energy, enterprise, talent and balanced national development.

National Context

This chapter's actions on Shannon Estuary Green Energy Park, port investment, biomethane, offshore wind, skills, childcare, healthcare and justice infrastructure can translate national decarbonisation and energy-security policy into delivery. Local progress will support NPF, NDP, Climate Action Plan, Biomethane Strategy, Large Energy User Action Plan and ports policy.

European Context

These actions align with RED III, REPowerEU, Clean Industrial Deal, CISAF, ReFuelEU Aviation and the EU Biomethane Industrial Partnership. Reflecting projects like Rotterdam, Eemshaven and approved green-hydrogen and clean-industry projects, port-led clusters, biomethane, hydrogen and renewables can use public infrastructure, GBER, de minimis, CISAF, IPCEI, auctions or notified aid.

Regional Delivery

RSES Implementation

Budget 2027 must ensure that the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies are treated as delivery mechanisms, not simply high-level planning documents. The National Planning Framework sets ambitious targets for population growth, compact development, regional balance and sustainable economic expansion. However, these objectives will not be achieved unless the projects and enabling infrastructure identified through the RSES and Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans are matched with funding, sequencing and accountability of delivery.

For too long, regional strategies have identified the right ambitions without the capital investment required to deliver them. Housing targets cannot be achieved without brownfield viability, public realm, city-centre regeneration and sustainable transport. Enterprise growth cannot be supported without energy, grid, port, airport, skills and access infrastructure. Regional balance cannot be delivered unless the infrastructure needed to support growth is funded in the regions where that growth is expected to occur.

Budget 2027 should therefore establish a clear capital delivery pathway for RSES and MASP priorities by bringing forward a Regional Delivery and Infrastructure Fund. This should include multi-annual funding for housing-enabling infrastructure, regional transport, water and wastewater upgrades, grid capacity, renewable energy infrastructure, port and airport connectivity, healthcare, education, justice infrastructure, city-centre regeneration and enabling utilities and focus on projects not funded elsewhere in the system.

The Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area is uniquely positioned to support national objectives on balanced regional development, energy security, enterprise growth and sustainable urban development. The region contains nationally significant assets including Limerick City, Shannon Airport, Shannon Foynes Port, the Shannon Estuary, major employment locations, higher education institutions and strategic access to the Atlantic Economic Corridor. These assets must be treated as national growth enablers and funded accordingly.

Budget 2027 should require each RSES and MASP to be accompanied by a funded implementation schedule, identifying priority infrastructure, responsible delivery bodies, project sequencing, annual milestones and measurable outcomes. Without this, regional strategies risk remaining aspirational rather than practical delivery frameworks. If the State is serious about achieving the National Planning Framework, it must fund the regional infrastructure required to make those targets achievable.

Funding should be tied to named projects, named delivery bodies, annual reporting and measurable progress against housing, transport, energy, enterprise, city-centre regeneration and regional development outcomes.

Sustainable Growth

Biomethane & Biogas

Budget 2027 should move the National Biomethane Strategy from ambition to practical implementation by providing targeted capital support, grid injection assistance, technical guidance, planning support, public awareness measures and long-term offtake certainty for the biogas industry.

Establishing Limerick as a biomethane cluster will allow the use of the regional dairy and livestock industries to produce carbon neutral biomethane. The Biomethane Industrial Partnership (BIP) is a public private initiative launched under the EU's REPowerEU plan whose goal is to accelerate the sustainable production of biomethane, targeting 35 billion cubic metres of annual production by 2030 to enhance Europe's Energy Independence. This is a huge opportunity for Ireland, via the Mid-West, to play a part in Europe's energy security.

Ireland has significant biomethane potential, with Gas Networks Ireland estimating annual production capacity of 14.8TWh and the potential to remove 3.94 million tonnes of carbon dioxide. Limerick is particularly well placed, with county-level analysis indicating it could account for 14% of national biomethane output. This creates a major opportunity to develop a Mid-West biomethane cluster linked to the wider Shannon Estuary clean energy ecosystem.

Budget 2027 should prioritise the removal of financial and non-financial barriers to anaerobic digestion, including limited technical knowledge, lack of project finance, planning complexity, public awareness challenges and the need for suitable landbanks. Supporting biomethane production would strengthen energy security, reduce emissions, support farm diversification and position Limerick as a national leader in renewable gas production.

To kick start biomethane, Budget 2027 should establish a dedicated biomethane production support scheme, modelled on the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme and the Offshore Renewable Energy Support Scheme, to provide the revenue certainty needed to unlock investment in anaerobic digestion and renewable gas production. The scheme should be funded through direct Exchequer support, and EU funding where available, rather than through an additional levy on gas consumers. This would support indigenous biomethane production, reduce compliance costs for obligated parties, protect end users, and help regions such as Limerick and the Mid-West develop renewable gas clusters linked to Ireland's wider energy security and decarbonisation objectives.

Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF)

SAF is already in use in small quantities around the globe. As per the European Commission's ReFuelEU, Aviation plays a crucial role in achieving climate neutrality by mandating an increased share of SAF in aviation. Initially, there was a 2% target by 2025, and is now progressing to a 6% target for 2030. Due to regulatory requirements from Europe, there will be an increased demand for SAF into the future, and Shannon can play a crucial role in Ireland becoming a major player in the SAF industry. Budget 2027 must begin to resource the build-up of the SAF industry in Ireland and the Mid-West.

Designated Maritime Area Plan

Budget 2026 provided welcome initial funding of €8 million for offshore renewable energy site surveying to support the development of the National ORE DMAP. Budget 2027 must now build on this by providing sufficient funding for DMAP delivery to ensure that the delivery office is adequately resourced to deliver national DMAPs by the agreed timeline of the end of 2027.

Offshore Wind Centre of Excellence

The Limerick-Shannon area is uniquely positioned to host the planned National Offshore Wind Centre of Excellence. Through the intersection of our Universities, their research and graduate pipeline, combined with the abundance of natural assets on the West coast, and a vast array of energy projects underway across the region. Limerick Chamber believes that building a world-class skills and innovation pipeline will require the use of existing assets and the Limerick-Shannon region has a comparative advantage when it comes to social, natural and built environment assets that will help the National Offshore Wind Centre of Excellence become a magnet for international researchers and companies alike. Such research centres have already been set up in Denmark and Norway (NOWITECH) and thus these countries are leading out on offshore deployment.

Ports

Budget 2027 must provide sustained, multi-annual capital investment in Shannon Foynes Port and its enabling infrastructure to unlock the Shannon Estuary's role as Ireland's leading clean energy, port and industrial decarbonisation cluster.

Shannon Foynes Port is uniquely positioned to support Ireland's offshore renewable energy ambitions, strengthen national trade capacity and advance the delivery of the Climate Action Plan. Its deep-water access, proximity to Atlantic offshore wind resources, existing industrial base and potential for expanded unitised shipping make it a national strategic asset. As a Tier 1 Port of National Significance and part of the EU TEN-T Core Network, the Port should be treated as enabling infrastructure for Ireland's energy security, industrial competitiveness and climate transition.

Budget 2027 should align investment in Shannon Foynes Port with the proposed Strategic Energy & Renewables Accelerator Ireland (SERAI), the Government's Large Energy User Action Plan and the implementation of RED III. This would allow the Shannon Estuary to be developed as a plan-led Green Energy Park, co-locating renewable energy generation, port infrastructure, storage, conversion technologies and large energy users in one strategic location.

Without timely delivery of enabling infrastructure, Ireland risks missing the opportunity to capture offshore wind supply-chain activity, attract clean industrial investment and build the logistics resilience required for long-term economic growth.

Investment in Shannon Foynes Port should therefore be viewed not simply as a transport or port project, but as a national competitiveness and decarbonisation priority. It will support floating offshore wind, renewable-powered manufacturing, hydrogen and biomethane development, energy storage, advanced logistics and industrial decarbonisation across the Shannon Estuary.

Budget 2027 should provide the funding and delivery certainty required to realise the ambitions set out in Vision 2041 and the Shannon Integrated Framework Plan. Doing so would unlock the full potential of the Shannon Estuary, support regional job creation, strengthen Ireland's energy independence and position the Mid-West as a national leader in the emerging green energy economy.

Strategic Energy & Renewables Accelerator Ireland (SERAI)

Budget 2027 must commit to a funded plan for the co-location of industry with energy. Limerick Chamber recommends SERAI as the best proposition for such an initiative.

The Strategic Energy & Renewables Accelerator Ireland (SERAI) is a plan-led delivery framework for the Shannon Estuary, covering Limerick, Clare and Kerry, to co-locate renewable and transition energy generation, energy storage, conversion technologies, port infrastructure, strategic industrial land and large energy users within a national-scale Green Energy Park.

Budget Ask	Policy Lever / Rationale
Establish and fund the Strategic Energy & Renewables Accelerator Ireland (SERAI) as a plan-led delivery framework	The Shannon Estuary has the scale, assets and strategic location to become Ireland's leading clean energy and industrial decarbonisation cluster. SERAI would provide the governance structure needed to align spatial planning, energy planning, enterprise policy, infrastructure delivery, port investment, grid capacity, land activation and skills.
Use the Government's Large Energy User Action Plan (LEAP) and National Planning Statements to designate the Shannon Estuary as Ireland's first Green Energy Park of scale.	LEAP supports a plan-led approach to co-locating large energy users with renewable energy supply. The Shannon Estuary is uniquely placed to deliver this model by bringing industry to the energy source, rather than placing additional demand on already constrained grid networks.
Use RED III to identify the Shannon Estuary as a Renewable Energy Acceleration Area	RED III requires Member States to identify suitable land, sea and inland water areas for renewable energy projects and enabling infrastructure. The Shannon Estuary should be prioritised as a strategically appropriate location for renewable generation, grid infrastructure, storage, hydrogen, port readiness and industrial decarbonisation

Budget Ask	Policy Lever / Rationale
Provide multi-annual capital funding for enabling infrastructure across the Estuary.	A Green Energy Park will only succeed where renewable energy potential is matched by grid capacity, port infrastructure, gas and energy security infrastructure, water services, transport links, industrial land and skills. Budget 2027 should fund the enabling infrastructure required to support the development of SERAI.
Link SERAI to a dedicated regional skills and innovation pathway.	The University of Limerick, Technological University of the Shannon, Mary Immaculate College and regional training providers can support the workforce needed for offshore wind, grid, hydrogen, biomethane, port logistics, advanced manufacturing and industrial decarbonisation. Budget 2027 should fund skills alignment to ensure the region can capture the employment and investment opportunity.
Create a single Shannon Estuary investment proposition for clean energy and industrial decarbonisation.	The region has a unique combination of deep-water port access, Atlantic offshore wind potential, 400 kV transmission infrastructure, national electricity and gas networks, Moneypoint, Tarbert, Ballylongford, Cahercon, Shannon Foynes Port, Shannon Airport, the Limerick-Foynes rail corridor and strategic industrial landbanks. These assets should be promoted as one national-scale investment proposition.

Ultimately, Budget 2027 should establish SERAI and use the policy levers available under LEAP and RED III to designate the Shannon Estuary as Ireland's first Green Energy Park of scale. This would create a nationally significant clean energy and industrial cluster, strengthen energy security, attract investment, support balanced regional growth and position the Mid-West as a leader in Ireland's transition to a low-carbon economy.

Social Infrastructure

Childcare

Budget 2027 must Strengthen supports for working parents - reducing barriers to employment for parents by lowering childcare costs, improving inclusion for children with additional needs, and reforming parental leave to support greater equality and flexibility. Budget 2027 must increase the universal subsidy rate under the National Childcare Scheme and publish a plan to deliver the Programme for Government commitment of €200 per month childcare costs.

Budget 2027 must ensure increased funding for specialised supports and training so childcare providers can better accommodate children with additional needs and disabilities, including specialist staff, adaptive materials and accessible facilities.

Skills Development

The higher education sector has one of the largest economic impacts of any sector in the Mid-West and acts as a key driver for many businesses deciding to locate here. A strong, well-funded higher education sector is essential to Ireland's competitiveness and balanced regional growth. In the Mid-West, the Higher Education sector is central to delivering high-demand skills, applied research, and enterprise collaboration across key sectors such as clean energy, advanced manufacturing, and digital health. Budget 2027 must increase core funding across the sector to meet growing student demand, fulfil pay and pension commitments, and ensure institutional sustainability. Government should also accelerate the rollout of borrowing powers for student accommodation, beginning with Technological Universities like TUS, and ensure access to infrastructure funding for institutions such as UL. This will support housing delivery, relieve pressure on regional rental markets, and contribute to compact urban development. Finally, increased investment in research capacity must extend to both technological universities and universities, this will unlock innovation-led growth, support enterprise collaboration and enhance Ireland's ability to compete for EU research funding.

Budget 2027 should provide a clear multi-annual funding pathway for higher education, ensuring that universities, technological universities and others can plan, expand and deliver for Ireland's future skills needs.

Ireland's higher education system is being asked to do more: educate a growing student population, support regional innovation, deliver applied research, and provide the talent pipeline needed by enterprise. However, funding has not kept pace with demand, cost inflation or the increasing complexity of institutional delivery.

Budget 2027 should move beyond short-term allocations and provide the long-term investment required to protect quality, grow capacity and ensure the sector can continue to support national competitiveness and balanced regional development.

Healthcare

Limerick Chamber welcomes the HSE purchase of the 44-acre site for a new hospital facility in Limerick and welcomes the Minister's desire to establish a project board for the site. Budget 2027 must ensure that the HSE, the Department and the project board are resourced adequately to ensure the speedy delivery of a new hospital for the region to tackle wait times at A&E and wider surgery waiting lists. Adequate healthcare, along with housing, education etc. are the basics required to improve the economic development of a region.

Justice

Budget 2027 should fund a time-bound national plan to expand Ireland's prison capacity, including the immediate upgrade of overcrowded facilities such as Limerick Prison. Investment should focus on modern, cost-effective facilities that improve safety, support rehabilitation and maintain public confidence in the justice system. Government should also progress planning for longer-term capacity needs, including a new national facility where required.

This must be matched with increased funding for community-based alternatives, diversionary programmes, addiction and mental health supports, as well as other wrap-around supports.

Chamber Team

Donnacha Hurley
CEO
Email: CEO@limerickchamber.ie

Seán Golden
Chief Economist & Director of Policy
Email: sgolden@limerickchamber.ie

Limerick Chamber

Advancing business together

www.limerickchamber.ie